

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 158889
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 158889

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, LY, US

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH LIBYAN CHARGE GASHUT

1. AT HIS REQUEST, LIBYAN CHARGE GASHUT CALLED ON DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY VELIOTES ON JUNE 29 PRIOR TO RETURNING TO LIBYA FOR CONSULTATION AND LEAVE. HE SAID HE WOULD BE DISCUSSING U.S. RELATIONS WITH HIS FOREIGN MINISTER. GASHUT INITIATED CONVERSATION BY STATING THAT HE WISHED TO DISCUSS DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S COMMENTS OF JUNE 13 TO EFFECT USG WAS WAITING FOR SOME MOVES ON PART OF LIBYANS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. GASHUT ASKED RHETORICAL QUESTION, "WHAT CAN WE DO," THEN PROCEEDED TO ANSWER IT BY STATING LIBYA WAS PREPARED TO SEND AMBASSADOR; HE ADDED THAT U.S. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 158889

SHOULD RELEASE C-130'S.

2. VELIOTES NOTED IN REPLY THAT IT WOULD BE BEST TO DISCUSS MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE POLICIES AT ISSUE BETWEEN US, THEN TO FOCUS ON POSSIBLE MISINTERPRETATION OF DEPARTMENT'S PRESS SPOKESMAN'S REMARKS. HE THEN REVIEWED IN DETAIL ADMINISTRATION'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY, WITH ITS PURPOSE THE

ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT, JUST PEACE FOR ALL IN THE AREA, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIANS. HE NOTED THAT THE LOGIC OF LIBYA'S REJECTIONIST POSTURE WAS THE FRUSTRATION OF THIS MAJOR POLICY INITIATIVE OF PRESIDENT CARTER AND THE CONDEMNATION OF THE AREA TO FUTURE WARS.

3. VELIOTES CONTINUED THAT LIBYA'S SUPPORT FOR REJECTIONIST ORGANIZATIONS AS A PART OF ITS MIDDLE EAST POLICY RESULTED IN LIBYAN SUPPORT FOR TERRORIST ACTIONS. WE DID NOT WANT TO GET INTO A STERILE ARGUMENT OF DEFINITIONS, I.E., TERRORIST VS. FREEDOM FIGHTERS. NO MATTER WHAT ONE CALLED THE PERSONS INVOLVED, THE MASSACRE OF INNOCENT PEOPLE, SUCH AS THE ROME AIRPORT TRAGEDY, WAS AN ABOMINABLE ACT WHICH HAD TO BE CONDEMNED BY ALL. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT WE WERE NOT DEALING IN SEMANTICS, BUT OUTRAGEOUS AND UNACCEPTABLE ACTIONS.

4. GASHUT, WITH FORCE AND SOME EMOTION, REPLIED BY DEFENDING HIS GOVERNMENT'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY. HE ARGUED THAT QADHAFI WAS NOT TRYING TO STOP THE CONVENING OF A GENEVA CONFERENCE BUT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS CONFERENCE COULD RESULT IN JUSTICE FOR THE PALESTINIANS. THE THRUST OF HIS PRESENTATION WAS THAT LIBYA COULD NOT DO OTHER THAN SUPPORT THE REJECTIONIST CAUSE IF IT WERE TO REMAIN TRUE TO ITS OWN REVOLUTIONARY TRADITIONS. HE EXPLAINED THAT LIBYA'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM WAS THE CREATION OF A SECULAR DEMOCRATIC STATE IN PALESTINE. AS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 158889

CONCERNS THE ISRAELIS, HE EXPLAINED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT BELIEVED THAT ALL JEWS WHO WERE IN PALESTINE PRIOR TO 1947 SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN AND COEXIST PEACEFULLY WITH THE ARABS IN THIS SECULAR DEMOCRATIC STATE. ALL OF THE OTHERS WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE. HE SUBSUMED THE "TERRORIST ISSUE" IN HIS PRESENTATION.

5. VELIOTES NOTED THAT SUCCESSIVE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATIONS HAD EXPRESSED THE COMMITMENT OF THIS COUNTRY TO THE SECURITY AND EXISTENCE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL. THIS WAS A GIVEN IN AMERICAN POLICY WHICH HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE ARAB CONFRONTATION STATES, WHO WERE COOPERATING WITH US IN OUR SEARCH FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. GASHUT RESPONDED BY DESCRIBING THE LIBYAN VIEW OF THE "ARAB NATION" WHICH, TO THE EXTENT WE COULD UNDERSTAND HIS POINT, SEEMED TO IMPLY THAT THOSE PARTICULAR ARAB STATES WE REFERRED TO WERE REALLY IRRELEVANT TO THE CURRENT SITUATION AND TO THE GREAT SWEEP OF HISTORY.

6. GASHUT RETURNED TO THE NEED FOR BOTH COUNTRIES TO ENGAGE IN ACTIONS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. HE BACKED INTO AN ENDORSEMENT OF A "HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE" BY EXPLAINING THE NECESSITY

FOR SENIOR OFFICIALS TO SIT AND REASON TOGETHER, PUTTING ASIDE THE ISSUES WHICH MAY DIVIDE US AND CONCENTRATING ON THE AREAS OF AGREEMENT. TO SUPPORT HIS CONTENTION OF WIDE AREAS OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN US, HE CITED THE FACT THAT LIBYA AND THE UNITED STATES HAD VOTED TOGETHER ON "GREAT NUMBERS" OF UN RESOLUTIONS.

7. CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO SUBJECT OF LIBYA'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER ARAB STATES. VELIOTES NOTED THAT, AS FAR AS U.S. WAS CONCERNED, BASICALLY THIS WAS SOMETHING FOR LIBYA AND THE OTHER ARAB STATES CONCERNED TO SORT OUT. GASHUT BRIGHTENED UP AT THIS POINT AND SAID, "THANK YOU, THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR." VELIOTES THEN NOTED THAT WE HAD, HOWEVER, LEGITIMATE CONCERNS ABOUT CERTAIN ASPECTS OF LIBYA'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER ARAB STATES, PARTICULARLY WHEN LIBYAN CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 158889

POLICIES AND ACTIONS WERE AIMED AT CERTAIN ARAB GOVERNMENTS AND LEADERS WHO WERE VERY FRIENDLY TO US AND WERE COOPERATING WITH US IN OUR SEARCH FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WE COULD ONLY CONCLUDE THAT A PRINCIPAL PURPOSE - IF NOT THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE - OF SUCH LIBYAN POLICIES WAS THE DISRUPTION OF OUR MIDDLE EAST PEACE POLICY. ALTHOUGH THESE WERE INTRA-ARAB PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED BY THE ARAB PARTIES CONCERNED, LIBYA SHOULD BE AWARE OF OUR INTERPRETATION OF ITS PURPOSES AS THEY AFFECT US.

8. VELIOTES THEN NOTED THAT, LOOKED AT IN LIGHT OF FOREGOING DISCUSSION, QUESTIONS OF EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS AND RELEASE OF C-130'S WERE SYMPTOMS OF A PROBLEM, NOT THE CAUSE. HE ADDED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY, THE SUCCESS OF WHICH WAS VERY IMPORTANT FOR GLOBAL AS WELL AS REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS, WAS OFFERING PEACE WITH JUSTICE TO ALL CONCERNED. IN STRIKING CONTRAST, BASED ON GASHUT'S DESCRIPTION, THE LOGIC OF LIBYAN POLICY WAS TO OFFER TO PALESTINIANS AND OTHERS THE "PEACE OF THE GRAVE." GASHUT PROTESTED THIS CONCLUSION AND REPEATED HIS EARLIER COMMENTS ABOUT THE NEED FOR LIBYA TO BE TRUE TO ITS REVOLUTIONARY TRADITIONS.

9. COMMENT: OUR CONVERSATION LASTED FOR ABOUT AN HOUR AND WAS ALWAYS CORDIAL, IF FRANK AND VIGOROUS. UPON LEAVING, GASHUT SAID HE WOULD LOOK FORWARD TO ANOTHER DISCUSSION AFTER HIS RETURN FROM LIBYA IN AUGUST. BASED ON THIS EXPERIENCE, WE CONCLUDE THAT NO USEFUL PURPOSE CAN BE SERVED BY INITIATING A "HIGHER LEVEL DIALOGUE" IN NEAR FUTURE. VANCE

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